



October 16, 2020
House Public Health Request for Information

RE: Interim Charge 2 Relating to Budgetary Changes Impacting State Health Programs

The Texas Association of Community Health Centers represents federally qualified health centers (FQHCs) throughout the state. FQHCs provide a wide array of primary and preventive care services including medical, dental, behavioral health, and vision services. The 72 health centers in Texas operate over 575 clinic sites located in 132 counties across the state.ⁱ FQHCs served over 1.6 million Texans and provided more than 6 million patient visits in 2019.ⁱⁱ Individuals without insurance made up 41% of patients, followed by Medicaid 29%, and Medicare 7%. FQHCs employed more than 12,000 FTEs.ⁱⁱⁱ

FQHCs have been on the front lines of pandemic response in their communities, providing COVID-19 screening, testing, and treatment while their normal operations have been upended. From April 3rd to September 4th 2020, FQHCs provided more than 380,000 COVID-19 tests.^{iv} The coronavirus pandemic has only highlighted the need for continued investments in the robust primary and preventive care safety-net that FQHCs provide for Texans across the state.

1115 Healthcare Transformation and Quality Improvement Program Waiver

TACHC urges legislators to develop a comprehensive plan to continue projects funded through the waiver and consider the most cost-effective and efficient way to expand access to health care services in Texas: drawing down millions in federal funds to expand Medicaid to uninsured, low-income Texans.

Texas's 1115 Waiver will be expiring in 2022, with funds for the Delivery System Reform and Incentive Payment (DSRIP) program expiring in 2021. While FQHCs are not performing providers in DSRIP projects, they are partners in this work and understand waiver funds help provide vital services that benefit the uninsured across Texas. At the end of the current waiver, Texas will have invested \$25 billion in tax payer dollars to expand access to health care services throughout the term of the waiver. Texas should prioritize ensuring the innovative approaches funded by these investments continue. The COVID-19 pandemic has stretched even further an already underfunded safety-net health care delivery system in Texas. TACHC urges legislators to develop a comprehensive plan to continue projects funded through the waiver and consider the most cost-effective and efficient way to expand access to health care services in Texas: drawing down millions in federal funds to expand Medicaid to uninsured, low-income Texans.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to provide information on these topics. Please do not hesitate to contact Shelby Tracy, Director of Policy and External Communications (stracy@tachc.org) with any questions about these comments.

ⁱ National Association of Community Health Centers (NACHC). Key Health Center Data by State, 2020. Federally-Funded Health Centers Only. Available at: <https://www.nachc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/2020-Key-Facts-by-State.pdf>

ⁱⁱ *Ibid.*

ⁱⁱⁱ *Ibid.*

^{iv} Based on HRSA COVID-19 weekly surveys from the week of April 10 through September 4, 2020. Response rates vary among weeks. Total includes both virus and antigen detection tests.